Communicating in Groups

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Food for Thought

"Hi Mom, I'm just calling to tell you that I'm not going to make it home for dinner again tonight. Jennifer was supposed to close tonight and she just called in sick. So Bob asked me if I would close—I'm the only one in the store right now who knows how to do it." "I can't believe it! Tonight is Sarah's last night at home before she deploys, and you know that Grandma and Grandpa are coming over for a big family dinner.

Food for Thought

What's wrong with you, Darla? Two nights ago you weren't home because you were playing softball; last night you begged off, claiming you had a group meeting for some class project; and now you're going to miss your sister's going away dinner? I just don't understand you. Isn't your family important to you at all? I mean, where do we fall in your priorities? It seems to me that you have a lot of commitments to other people and that we are always last." "But Mom, ..."

Nature and Types of Groups

- A group is a collection of three or more people who interact and attempt to influence each other in order to accomplish a common purpose.

- Group communication—all the verbal and nonverbal messages shared with or among members of the group—is what makes our participation in these different groups a positive or negative experience.

Nature and Types of Groups

- ► Families
- ► Social Friendship Groups
- ► Support Groups
- ► Interest Groups
- ► Service Groups

Nature and Types of Groups

- Work Group Teams
  - Heterogeneous Group
  - Homogeneous Group
  - Work Group Team Goals:
    - Effective goals are specific
    - Effective goals serve a common purpose
    - Effective goals are challenging
    - Effective goals are shared
- Virtual Groups

Characteristics of Healthy Groups

Healthy groups are formed around a constructive purpose and are characterized by ethical goals, interdependence, cohesiveness, productive norms, accountability, and synergy.

characteristics of healthy groups

- ► Healthy Groups Have Ethical Goals

- ► Healthy Groups Are Interdependent

- ► Healthy Groups Are Cohesive

- ► Healthy Groups Develop and Abide by Productive Norms

- ► Healthy Groups Are Accountable

- ► Healthy Groups Are Synergetic

Stages of Group Development

- ► Forming – the initial stage of group development characterized by orientation, testing, and dependence.

- ► Storming – the stage of group development characterized by conflict and power plays as members seek to have their ideas accepted and to find their place within the group's power structure.

    - ► Groupthink a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressure to conform.

Stages of Group Development

► Norming the stage of group development during which the group solidifies its rules for behavior, resulting in greater trust and motivation to achieve the group goal.

► Performing the stage of group development when the skills, knowledge, and abilities of all members are combined to overcome obstacles and meet goals successfully.

► Adjourning the stage of group development in which members assign meaning to what they have done and determine how to end or maintain interpersonal relations they have developed

Conflict in Groups

- ► Pseudo Conflict

- ► Issue Related Group Conflict

- ► Personality Related Group Conflict

- ► Culture and Conflict

- ► Virtual Groups and Conflict

Evaluating Group Dynamics

Group dynamics is the way a group interacts to achieve its goal. Effective groups periodically stop and evaluate how their interactions are affecting what they are accomplishing and how members perceive themselves and others.

Group Dynamics Evaluation Form

Meeting date: ----------------------------------Your name: ---
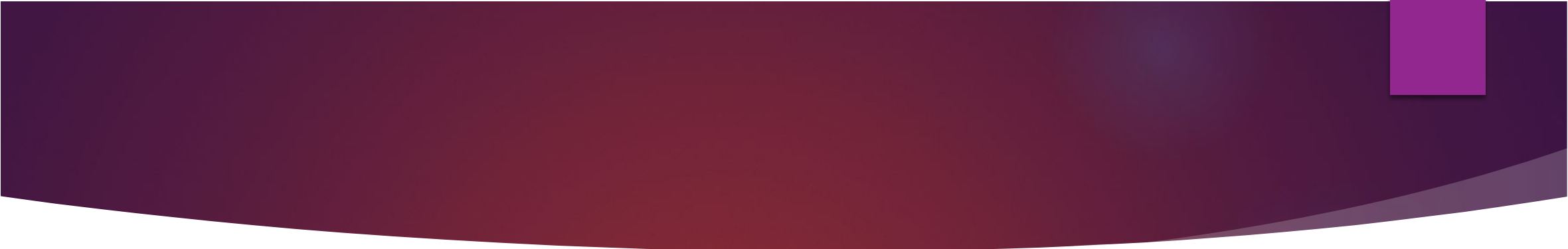
Directions after each required group meeting:

1. provide ethical critiques for both your group members and yourself.

2. Rate each individual on his or her performance in the group.

3. Justify the rating with specific examples.

As you rate each member, consider the following:

- commitment to the group goal

- fulfills individual assignments

- manages interpersonal conflicts

- encourages group participation

- helps keep the discussion on track

Yourself ——————————————————————————————————

Circle overall individual rating

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

(poor)   (met requirements)   (excellent)

Tasks accomplished:

Tasks assigned:

Ethical critique:

Group member ——————————————————————————————————

Circle overall individual rating

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

(poor)   (met requirements)   (excellent)

Tasks accomplished:

Tasks assigned:

Ethical critique:

Group member ——————————————————————————————————

Circle overall individual rating

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Tasks accomplished:

Tasks assigned:

Ethical critique:

Group member ——————————————————————————————————

Circle overall individual rating

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

(poor)   (met requirements)   (excellent)

Tasks accomplished:

Tasks assigned:

Ethical critique:

The community service and outreach committee of Students in Communication was meeting to determine what cause should benefit from their annual fund-raising talent contest.

"So," said Mark, "does anyone have any ideas about whose cause we should sponsor?"

"Well," replied Glenna, "I think we should give it to a group that's doing literacy work."

"Sounds good to me," replied Mark.

"My aunt works at the Boardman Center as the literacy coordinator, so why don't we just adopt them?" asked Glenna.

"Gee, I don't know much about the group," said Reed.

Case Study

"Come on, you know, they help people learn how to read," replied Glenna sarcastically.

"Well, I was kind of hoping we'd take a look at sponsoring the local teen runaway center," offered Angelo.

"Listen, if your aunt works at the Boardman Center," commented Leticia, "let's go with it."

"Right," said Pablo, "that's good enough for me."

"Yeah," replied Heather, "let's do it and get out of here."

"I hear what you're saying, Heather," Mark responded, "I've got plenty of other stuff to do."

"No disrespect meant to Glenna, but wasn't the Boardman Center in the news because of questionable use of funds?" countered Angelo.

"Do we really know enough about them?"

"OK," said Mark, "enough discussion. I've got to get to class. All in favor of the literacy program at the Boardman Center indicate by saying aye. I

think we've got a majority. Sorry, Angelo—you can't win them all."

"I wish all meetings went this smoothly," Heather said to Glenna as they left the room.

"I mean, that was really a good meeting."

1. What did the group really know about the Boardman Center? Is it good group discussion practice to rely on a passing comment of one member?

2. Regardless of whether the meeting went smoothly, is there any ethical problem with this process? Explain.